

Exhibit No. 2Date 2-11-2009Bill No. SB 350

February 11, 2009

To: The Members of the Montana Senate Public Welfare and Safety Committee

RE: SB 350, Routine HIV Testing

Dear Committee Members:

Today you will be considering SB 350, the bill to revise laws on HIV testing. I strongly urge your support.

The purpose of the bill is to bring Montana's codes regarding HIV testing into line with the current CDC recommendations. It also establishes HIV testing as part of the standard panel of prenatal lab work for women receiving pregnancy care. This is the standard of care as described by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. Essentially, it makes HIV testing no different than testing for Syphilis, Hepatitis, or any number of other conditions.

When HIV was first described, and we were finally able to test for it, it was a universally fatal disease that affected mainly homosexuals and IV drug users. Because of the fear of discrimination, barriers to testing, such as pretest and posttest counseling and a special informed consent, were put into place.

Presently, HIV is no longer necessarily fatal, and it occurs in a much more diverse population. In the past few years, in Billings, Montana, I have personally taken care of two HIV positive young women during their pregnancies. Both women became positive as a result of heterosexual transmission. Because we knew they were HIV positive, they received proper treatment and monitoring through their pregnancies. Both had babies that are HIV negative as a result of their care. Nationally, we have been able to reduce the mother-to-baby transmission rate to less than 1% with proper treatment.

The bill provides that the patient has the ability to opt out of testing. At no point will patients be forced to have tests that they don't want. On the other hand it removes the stigma of HIV testing and makes it more readily available. Universal screening in pregnancy has been found to be much more effective than risk-based screen in the detection of HIV infection and in the reduction of mother-to-baby infection.

This is a bill that should have no attached extra cost. It removes barriers to testing, and establishes that we in Montana abide by the standards described by both the CDC and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. It is an important bill that has the potential to save lives, and prevent transmission of HIV to newborns. I urge your support.

Please email me or call me if you have questions or concerns. I would be more than happy to talk with you any time. I appreciate the work you are doing in Helena. Thanks.

Sincerely,

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